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### **Guidelines for Clinicians Prescribing Neuraminidase Inhibitors**

The Wisconsin Division of Public Health strongly discourages healthcare providers from prescribing oseltamivir (Tamiflu®), zanamivir (Relenza®) or any other influenza antiviral medication for private stockpiling purposes. This trend has been identified because of concerns regarding the potential of an influenza pandemic and the current avian influenza situation in Southeast Asia, China, Europe and elsewhere.

The following facts can be used to support this DPH recommendation:

- No sustained or ongoing transmission of the H5N1 avian influenza strains among humans has occurred in anywhere in the world.
- There has been no H5N1 avian influenza in poultry or humans in the United States.
- There are limited supplies of Tamiflu® and Relenza® in the United States. Hoarding of these drugs now because of concerns about a future pandemic may result in these antiviral medications becoming unavailable for those who need it most during the current regular influenza season.
- The indiscriminate and inappropriate use of Tamiflu® or Relenza® may promote the development and spread of resistance to these important drugs among influenza viruses.
- To be maximally effective as prophylaxis, antiviral medication must be taken each day for the duration of influenza activity in the community, making use of these drugs for prophylaxis questionable and very costly.

#### **Appropriate use of neuraminidase inhibitors**

The highest current priority for use of Tamiflu® or Relenza® is for treatment of people during the upcoming regular influenza season who are at greatest risk of serious complications from influenza virus infection (e.g. persons >65 years, young children, and persons with certain chronic diseases). If administered within 2 days of illness onset, neuraminidase inhibitors can reduce the duration of uncomplicated influenza infection by approximately 1 day.

The next highest priority is for use of Tamiflu® as prophylaxis in persons at high risk of serious complications from influenza infection who are exposed to influenza (e.g. household in which someone has been diagnosed with influenza or hospital or nursing home with an outbreak of influenza) during the regular influenza season. It should be noted that Relenza® has not been approved for prophylaxis.

**Important Measures to prevent influenza**

Additional steps people can take to help keep other people healthy this influenza season include: getting their influenza vaccination, covering their mouths with tissues when coughing, staying home from work or school when sick with cough illness and washing hands immediately after coughing or touching respiratory secretions.